

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9604

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY SANAA

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 7396

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: SA, PFOR, ET

SUBJ: VISIT OF ETHIOPIAN DELEGATION TO SAUDI ARABIA

REF : JIDDA 7374

1. DURING A MEETING WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE PRINCE SULTAN DECEMBER 17, AMBASSADOR ASKED IF THE PRINCE HAD ANY COMMENTS ABOUT THE RECENT VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA OF A DELEGATION FROM ETHIOPIA'S MILITARY COMMAND COUNCIL (GROUP DEPARTED DECEMBER 16). SULTAN REPLIED THAT ALTHOUGH KING FAISAL'S SCHEDULE THESE DAYS WAS ALMOST MONOPOLIZED BY HIGH-RANKING MUSLIM LEADERS HERE ON THE PILGRIMAGE, THE SAG HAD NOT WANTED TO TURN DOWN THE ETHIOPIAN REQUEST TO SEND A DELEGATION. THE KING THOUGHT IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE GOE, WHICH FACES A PERIOD OF DOMESTIC INSTABILITY, TO HAVE A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF SAUDI ARABIA'S VIEWS.

2. KING FAISAL MADE IT CLEAR TO THE DELEGATION THAT IF THEY GAVE RADICALS OR COMMUNISTS A PLACE IN THEIR MOVEMENT, THE ETHIOPIANS WOULD BE THE LOSERS. (SULTAN SAID THE SAG WAS NOT SO MUCH CONCERNED WITH A DIRECT SOVIET OR CHINESE COMMUNIST RELATIONSHIP WITH ETHIOPIAN LEADERS AS THEY WERE THAT SOME
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OPPORTUNISTS IN THE OFFICERS' MOVEMENT MIGHT APPEAL FOR OUT-

SIDE COMMUNIST HELP TO STRENGTHEN THEIR POSITION.) WITH REGARD TO ERITREA, KING FAISAL COUNSELED THAT FOR THE GOE TO ENJOY GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD, THE ERITREANS SHOULD BE "GIVEN THEIR DIGNITY". THE KING URGED THAT THE UN RESOLUTION OF 1952 BE IMPLEMENTED, AND SAID SAUDI ARABIA WAS PREPARED TO USE ITS GOOD OFFICES TO MEDIATE WITH THE ERITREANS IF THE GOE DESIRED.

3. SULTAN INDICATED THE ETHIOPIANS' RESPONSE HAD NOT BEEN VERY FORTHCOMING; THEY TOLD FAISAL THEY CONTINUED TO REGARD ERITREA AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF ETHIOPIA. SULTAN HAD THE IMPRESSION, HOWEVER, THAT AFTER THE ETHIOPIANS' SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION WITH ACTING MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS MAS'UD, THEIR POSITION WAS PERHAPS NOT QUITE SO INFLEXIBLE, AND THAT THE DOOR TO FURTHER DIALOGUE HAD BEEN LEFT OPEN.
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